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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001383

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATION IMPROVING, BUT SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES PERSIST

REF: A. KINSHASA 1323

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 1356

Classified By: DCM TDougherty for reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: At an August 25 meeting with CIAT, Independent Electoral Commission and GDRC officials reported improvements in the voter registration process. More than 6 million Congolese have now registered, and registration began in three additional provinces this week. Significant challenges remain, however. The registration process is behind schedule, police and registration officials have not been paid, logistical support is still wanting, and no apparent progress has been made in the drafting of an election law since the last inter-institutional meeting on elections. CIAT members have strongly reiterated their request for regular meetings with the "Espace Presidentiel" (the President and four Vice Presidents) to discuss elections and other issues critical to the success of the Transition. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Presidency officials organized a meeting with CIAT chiefs of mission on August 25 as a follow-up to the August 15 inter-institutional meeting hosted by President Kabila (reftel A). Called on short notice, the utility of such a meeting was put to question at a preparatory CIAT meeting earlier in the day in light of the fact that key GDRC players would be absent. Not in attendance were President Kabila (currently in Katanga), Vice President Ruberwa (who is in the Kivus), Vice President Yerodia (representing the GDRC at the presidential inauguration in Bujumbura), the Minister of Interior (in Ituri), and the Minister of Defense (also in the East). The meeting nevertheless went forward in order to review progress made in voter registration since the August 15 meeting. With Vice President Zahidi Ngoma presiding, the GDRC was also represented by Vice President Bemba, Independent Election Commission (CEI) President Malu Malu, the National Assembly and Senate presidents, and President Kabila's chief of staff.

"Clear Improvement" in Voter Registration...

[1](#)3. (U) CEI President Malu Malu told CIAT members there had been a "clear improvement" in voter registration since August [1](#)5. Thanks to MONUC, the military, NGOs, and the churches, voter registration kits were being delivered more smoothly, he said, at least to the principal provincial centers from which they are distributed locally. Registration has begun in Maniema and North and South Kivu provinces, albeit tentatively. As of August 24, more than 6,283,000 Congolese have been registered country-wide.

[1](#)4. (U) The CEI reported that with 100% of the registration centers operational in Bas-Congo and with almost a million voters registered, registration will soon end in the province and kits will then be sent from there to Equateur or Bandundu provinces where registration has not yet begun. In Orientale province, 877 of a projected 1069 centers are now operational, and about 825,000 have been registered. Once registration has been completed there, more kits will become available for registration in other provinces.

[1](#)5. (U) The three provinces in the third phase of the registration process -- Katanga, Western Kasai, and Eastern Kasai -- where registration commenced on August 7, are far behind schedule. In Katanga, only 325 of 1195 centers have opened (though Malu Malu said about 200 more would be opening imminently), with more than a half million voters registered to-date. Progress is being made in Western Kasai (579,000 registered), though only about 30% of the centers are operational. The situation in Eastern Kasai was termed the most critical by Malu Malu, with only 230 of 826 centers open, and with only 378,000 citizens registered.

[1](#)6. (U) Registration began in the Kivus and in Maniema on August 21. By August 24, however, only 104 of 792 centers were open in North Kivu (with only 33,000 voters registered), 69 of 689 were open in South Kivu (with slightly more than 20,000 voters registered), and 24 of 450 centers were open in Maniema (with fewer than 5,000 voters registered). Malu Malu said that more registration kits had been delivered that day to the Kivus.

...but Significant Problems Remain

17. (SBU) Malu Malu reported that, despite general improvement in the registration process, the CEI is still confronted by significant problems. Among those cited were the distribution of registration kits at the local level, security concerns in Ituri (reftel B), and the issue of large numbers of Congolese refugees pressing to return from Tanzania to areas in South Kivu where virtually no infrastructure exists. Moreover, extending registration periods first in Kinshasa and then in Bas-Congo and Orientale provinces has had a domino effect that will render it impossible to complete national registration by September 26 as originally envisaged.

18. (C) SRSB and CIAT chiefs of mission raised additional problems. Despite assurances by the Minister of Interior that police would be paid, payments to police officers at registration centers have not been made. Many registration officials have not been paid, many have not been able to work at centers where local communities have rejected them as outsiders, and some officials are poorly trained. The government has apparently not availed itself of repeated offers made by Chamber of Commerce officials to provide logistical support. And although MONUC is providing logistic support, the GDRC's performance is wanting.

19. (C) Vice President Bemba noted that President Kabila, through the Minister of Interior, is instructing governors and provincial and territorial officials to provide the maximum possible logistical support. He noted, however, additional problems that had come to his attention. They included the long distances citizens in rural areas must often travel to get to a registration center. Worse still, once citizens make the long trip to centers, they often find centers so crowded that they cannot register that day.

110. (C) Of significant concern is the fact that no progress has been made in drafting an election law nor in arranging to convene an extraordinary session of parliament in September for it to be discussed and debated. Both the presidents of the National Assembly and Senate pointed out that many members of parliament are currently in their home districts where they are involved in the registration process. Both noted, however, that they personally understand the need and the urgency to move forward with the election law. Vice President Zahidi suggested that the matter should be raised at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Comment

11. (C) While the inter-institutional meeting was useful as a progress report on registration efforts, an individual briefing with the CEI president would have been just as effective. Unfortunately, the key GDRC players who had questions to answer were not in attendance. The Minister of Interior, for example, has to explain why police have still not been paid despite repeated assurances from him that they would be. Progress must be made quickly on the election law, and that message -- along with one about the necessity of the government living up to its commitments to provide logistical support throughout the country -- needs to be heard clearly by the senior-most leadership. To that end, CIAT members were clear in asking for another follow-up inter-institutional meeting and, more importantly, for regular meetings with the "Espace Presidentiel" to discuss election-related and other issues critical to the success of the Transition. End comment.

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